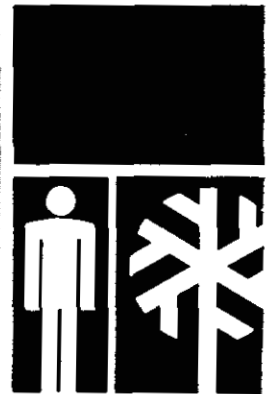


general management plan  
land protection plan  
wilderness suitability review



NOATAK

NATIONAL PRESERVE / ALASKA



## WILDERNESS SUITABILITY REVIEW

### MANDATES

Section 1317(a) of ANILCA directs that a review be made of the suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness of all lands within preserve unit boundaries not so designated by the act. Section 1317(b) specifies that "the Secretary shall conduct his review, and the President shall advise the United States Senate and House of Representatives of his recommendations, in accordance with the provisions of sections 3(c) and (d) of the Wilderness Act." The review is to be completed by December 2, 1985. This suitability review meets the requirements of ANILCA.

Recommendations on whether to designate suitable areas as wilderness will be made following completion of the general management plan. An environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared as part of the wilderness recommendation process. The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on these recommendations, and public hearings will be held. Upon completion of the EIS and secretarial review, the president will make his recommendations to Congress.

### WILDERNESS SUITABILITY CRITERIA

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as follows:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Wilderness suitability criteria were developed that reflect the definition of wilderness contained in the Wilderness Act and the provisions of ANILCA specific to wilderness areas in Alaska. These criteria were applied to all nonwilderness lands in the preserve to determine their suitability for designation. These criteria relate to the physical character of the land and current land status. Other factors such as appropriateness for management as wilderness and state and local concerns with wilderness management will be considered during the formulation of the recommendations.

All future wilderness recommendations will recognize valid existing rights including rights-of-way under RS 2477.

The following criteria were used in determining the suitability or nonsuitability for wilderness designation:

Table 9. Criteria Used in Determining Wilderness Suitability

<u>Description of Land or Activity</u>		<u>Suitable for Wilderness</u>	<u>Not Suit- able for Wilderness</u>	<u>Suita- bility Pending</u>
Land Status	Federal	X		
	Federal, under application or selection			X
	State and private land patented and tentatively approved		X	
	Private ownership of subsurface estate		X	
Mining	Areas with minor ground disturbances from past mining activities	X		
	Areas with major past ground disturbances from mining activities		X	
	Current mining activities and ground disturbances		X	
Roads and ORV Trails	Unimproved roads or ORV trails that are unused or little used by motor vehicles	X		
	Improved roads or ORV trails regularly used by motor vehicles		X	
Airstrips	Unimproved or minimally improved and maintained	X		
	Improved and maintained		X	

Cabins	Uninhabited structures; hunter, hiker and patrol cabins	X
	Inhabited as a primary place of residence	X
Size of Unit	Greater than 5,000 acres adjacent to existing wilderness, or of a manageable size	X
	Less than 5,000 acres or of unmanageable size	X

#### LANDS SUBJECT TO REVIEW

Of the approximately 6.5 million acres comprising Noatak National Preserve, approximately 5.8 million acres were designated as wilderness by ANILCA. The remaining lands consisting of over 759,000 acres in the southwest portion of the preserve are subject to the wilderness suitability review required by section 1317.

All federal lands determined suitable for wilderness designation will be managed under the terms of ANILCA to maintain the wilderness character and values of the lands until designation recommendations have been proposed and Congress has acted on these proposals.

#### WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS AND SUITABILITY DETERMINATION

Using the above criteria, all of the nonwilderness federal lands within the preserve have been determined suitable for wilderness designation based on their present undeveloped and unimpaired state. There are no major past or current mining developments, improved roads or ATV trails, improved or maintained airstrips, or inhabited cabins on the federal lands subject to this review. However, 288,717 acres have been selected by regional and village native corporations under terms of ANCSA (see Land Status map). Whether these lands will be transferred out of federal ownership is uncertain at this time.

For purposes of this suitability review, two preliminary wilderness study areas--those lands under selection (suitability pending) and those that will definitely remain in federal ownership (suitable)--have been identified and analyzed (see Wilderness Suitability map). A determination of suitability does not affect any pending land selections or other prior existing land disposal actions.

Area 1 (approximately 290,000 acres) - These are the lands selected by the native corporations and individuals; they are east of the Noatak River in the southwestern-most portion of the preserve and consist primarily of bottomlands along the river. In the southern portion they

take in a portion of the Igichuk Hills. They also encompass the downstream portions of the Agashashok and Eli river drainages. They are undeveloped and would, if retained in federal ownership, complement the adjoining preserve lands to the east. The lands or any portions thereof are unsuitable if conveyed out of federal ownership and suitable if retained in federal ownership. These lands are shown as "Suitability Pending" on the Wilderness Suitability map.

Area 2 (approximately 469,000 acres) - These lands encompass the upstream portions of the Agashashok and Eli river drainages as well as the southern end of the Maiyumerak Mountains. They are undeveloped and, therefore, suitable for further consideration as wilderness. As such, they are a logical geographic extension of the already designated wilderness lands to the north. These lands are shown as "Suitable" on the Wilderness Suitability map.

Changes in land status occurring or likely to occur between now and when future wilderness recommendations are made to the Congress will be reflected in those recommendations. All future wilderness recommendations will be made subject to valid existing rights.

# NOATAK NATIONAL PRESERVE




## WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

Noatak National Preserve

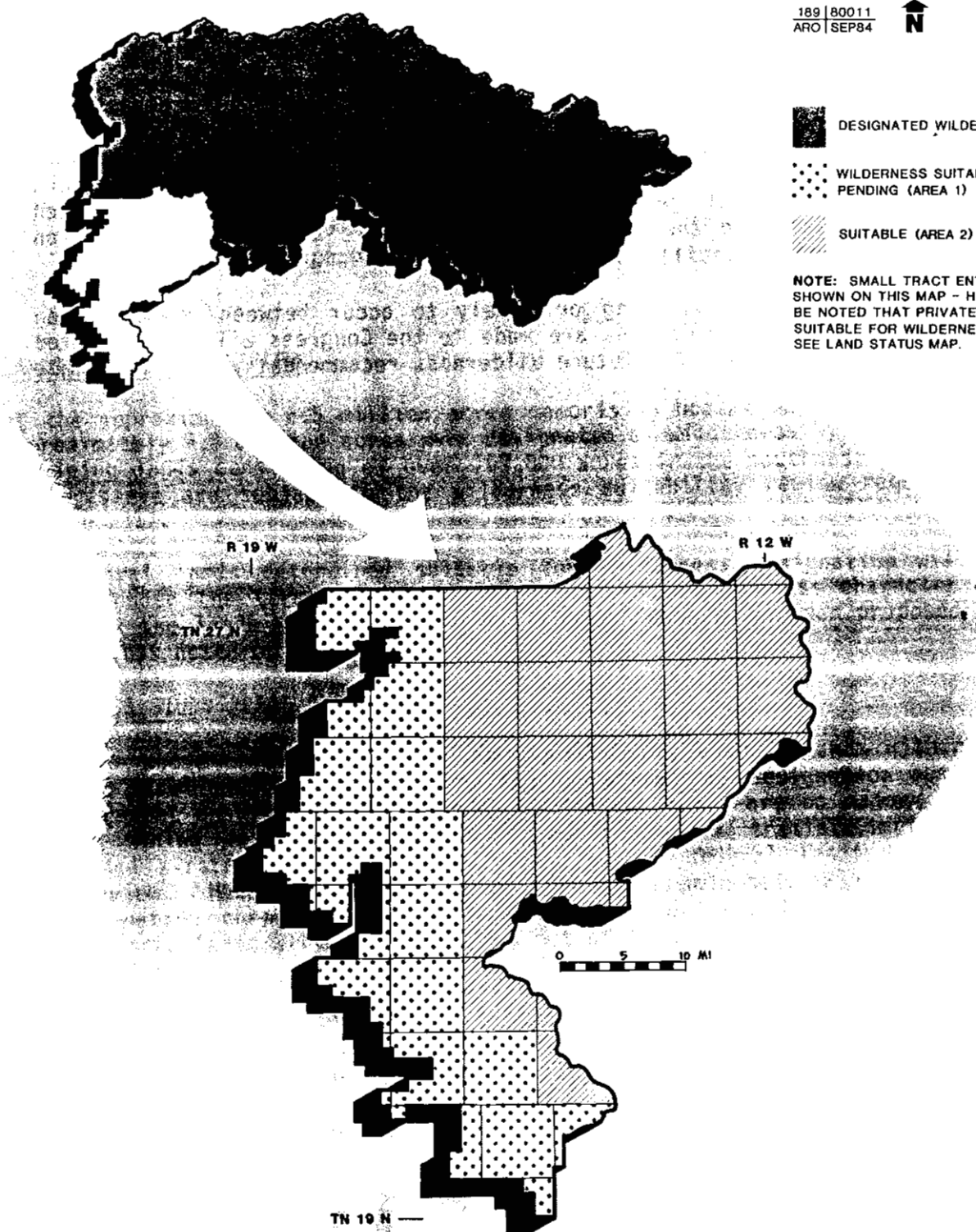
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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-  DESIGNATED WILDERNESS
-  WILDERNESS SUITABILITY  
PENDING (AREA 1)
-  SUITABLE (AREA 2)

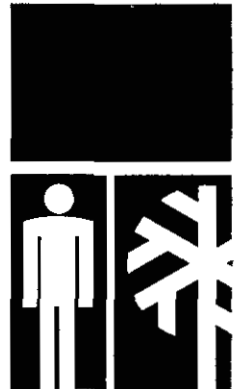
NOTE: SMALL TRACT ENTRIES ARE NOT  
SHOWN ON THIS MAP - HOWEVER IT SHOULD  
BE NOTED THAT PRIVATE LANDS ARE NOT  
SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION.  
SEE LAND STATUS MAP.



general management plan  
land protection plan  
wilderness suitability review

WRANGELL ST. ELIAS

NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE / ALASKA



Additions to the park/preserve or acquisitions that are within the congressionally established wilderness boundary will automatically become wilderness upon acquisition, pursuant to section 103(c) of ANILCA.

Lands added or acquired will be managed in the same manner as other unit lands of the same designation.

Insufficient information is available upon which to make recommendations for other park/preserve boundary changes at this time. Needed information includes resource inventories, subsistence use records, and resolution of land entitlements. This information will be gathered through projects identified in the park/preserve resource management plan. Based on this information, other boundary adjustments may be proposed in future management plans.

Boundary adjustments will also be considered as part of future land exchanges should federal land on the outer edges of the park/preserve be exchanged for nonfederal land elsewhere in the area (e.g., exchanging federal land north of the Copper River between Indian Creek and the Slana River for state land in the Chitina Valley). In such exchanges, removal of the nonfederal holdings that become located at the edge of the park/preserve could facilitate management by both the nonfederal interest and the National Park Service.

#### WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

Approximately 9,687,000 acres of wilderness were designated by ANILCA in the park/preserve, leaving about 3,498,000 acres as nonwilderness. (These are the gross acreages within the wilderness and nonwilderness boundaries. Nonfederal lands within the wilderness boundary are not part of the designated wilderness.)

Section 1317(a) of ANILCA directs that a review be made of the suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness of all lands not so designated by the act. Section 1317(b) specifies that "the Secretary shall conduct his review, and the President shall advise the United States Senate and House of Representatives of his recommendations, in accordance with the provisions of sections 3(c) and (d) of the Wilderness Act."

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as follows:

(3) (c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which



(1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Wilderness review criteria specific to Wrangell-St. Elias were developed that reflect the act's definition of wilderness. These criteria were applied to all nonwilderness lands in the park/preserve to determine their suitability.

#### Land Status

Federal land - suitable

Federal land under application, unpatented mining claims, and cemetery and historic sites - unsuitable if conveyed or patented into nonfederal ownership; may be suitable if retained in federal ownership

Patented land - unsuitable

(includes lands tentatively approved or interimly conveyed)

#### Mining Development

Areas of minor past activities and disturbance and seismic line scars - suitable

Areas of major past and current activities - unsuitable

#### Roads and ATV Trails

Unimproved and unused or little used roads or ATV trails - suitable

Improved and regularly used roads or ATV trails - unsuitable

#### Landing strips

Unimproved or minimally improved strips - suitable

Improved and maintained strips - unsuitable

#### Cabins

Uninhabited structures; hunter, hiker, and patrol cabins - suitable

Inhabited structures as a primary place of residence - unsuitable

#### Size of Units

Greater than 5,000 acres, adjacent to existing wilderness or of a manageable size - suitable

Less than 5,000 acres or of an unmanageable size - unsuitable

#### Historic and Archeological Sites

Sites not currently used or intended for primary visitor use - suitable

Primary visitor attractions - unsuitable

Much of the nonwilderness land is not in federal ownership, and as such does not qualify for wilderness designation. Some of the nonwilderness lands are under application, and if relinquished or determined invalid, may qualify for wilderness designation in the future. Changes in land status occurring or likely to occur between now and when future wilderness recommendations are made to Congress will be reflected in those recommendations. All future wilderness recommendations will recognize valid existing rights, including rights-of-way under RS 2477.

Based on a preliminary review, it is determined that the following federal nonwilderness lands do not meet the criteria (see Wilderness Suitability map in back pocket): 1) a narrow strip of land paralleling the shore of the Malaspina forelands (within 100 yards of mean high tide) is unsuitable because of commercial fishing activities; 2) the area around Chisana is unsuitable because of extensive mining development and nonfederal interests; 3) several scattered parcels of federal land between the Copper River and Mt. Drum are unsuitable because they are surrounded by nonfederal lands; 4) the Kuskulana River valley is unsuitable because of mining development and well-defined routes to several nonfederal interests within the valley; 5) an area east of McCarthy is unsuitable because of its extensive mining claims, active mining operations, human habitation, and numerous buildings; 6) an area between the Nabesna Road and Tanada Lake, and the Suslota Lake trail north of the Nabesna Road that allows access to BLM lands north of the preserve, are unsuitable because of the impacts from regularly used access routes for subsistence, recreation, and nonfederal interests; and 7) the main road corridors (Chitina-McCarthy Road, Nabesna Road, Dan Creek Road, and Kennicott Road).

In total, approximately 2,243,800 acres of nonwilderness federal lands within the park/preserve meet the criteria as established by the Wilderness Act. All lands determined suitable for wilderness designation will be managed under the terms of ANILCA to maintain the wilderness character and values of the lands until designation recommendations have been proposed and Congress has acted on these proposals.

Recommendations on whether to designate suitable areas as wilderness will be made following completion of the GMP. An EIS will be prepared as part of the wilderness recommendation process. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on these recommendations, and public hearings will be held. Upon completion of the EIS and secretarial review, the president is to make his recommendations to Congress.

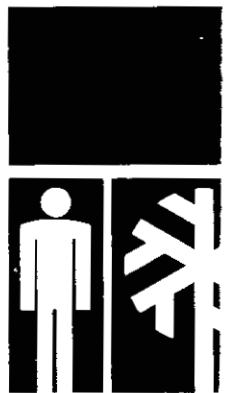
Wilderness management for those lands already designated as wilderness has been integrated with other aspects of visitor use and resource management for the park/preserve. Wilderness management is discussed in more detail in appendix H.

general management plan  
land protection plan  
charley wild river management plan  
wilderness suitability review  
march 1985



# YUKON-CHARLEY RIVERS

NATIONAL PRESERVE / ALASKA



A review of all lands within the preserve regarding their suitability or unsuitability for preservation as wilderness has been accomplished in accordance with section 1317 of ANILCA and section 3 of the Wilderness Act.

The Wilderness Act created a national wilderness preservation system to be made up of federally owned lands designated by Congress. The intent was to "secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness." The act defines wilderness:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is . . . an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is . . . an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Wilderness Act prohibits certain uses in wilderness areas, stating that commercial enterprise, permanent or temporary roads not "necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area," motorized vehicles and equipment, and structures are incompatible with wilderness. However, ANILCA enacts certain wilderness management provisions for Alaska, in recognition of its unique conditions. Section 1315 permits the continuation of existing public use cabins and the construction of a limited number of new public use cabins or shelters if appropriate and under certain restrictions. Section 1110 authorizes the use of motorboats, snowmachines, and airplanes for traditional activities in wilderness study areas, and federal regulations allow the continuation of established uses of aircraft and motorboats in all areas unless specifically prohibited by the superintendent. Wilderness designation will not prohibit or otherwise restrict sport hunting, fishing, trapping, or traditional subsistence activities in the preserve.

The wilderness suitability review examined all lands in the preserve on an individual drainage basis except for the Nimrod Peak/Squaw Mountain/Windfall area. The criteria for suitability included factors of ownership, existing uses, environmental character, and size of area. The ratings of each area against these criteria are listed in table 10.

All factors were then examined together to determine each drainage's suitability for wilderness designation. Generally, those drainages with large amounts of nonfederal land or unpatented mining claims were deemed

unsuitable for wilderness because of the associated high probability of environmental impacts within their watersheds.

The lands deemed suitable for wilderness designation include approximately 1,815,370 acres. This is 72 percent of the total acreage of the preserve and 85 percent of the federal acreage in the preserve. To create manageable units, the drainages would be combined as follows:

Charley unit (1,236,270 acres): Charley River, Weshrinarin Creek, Washington Creek, and upper Seventymile River

Eureka unit (118,770 acres): Andrew and Eureka creeks

Kathul unit (116,780 acres): Kandik River and Rock Creek

Nimrod unit (114,780 acres): Nimrod Peak/Squaw Mountain/Windfall area and Nation River

Thanksgiving unit (102,030 acres): Takoma, Thanksgiving, and Webber creeks

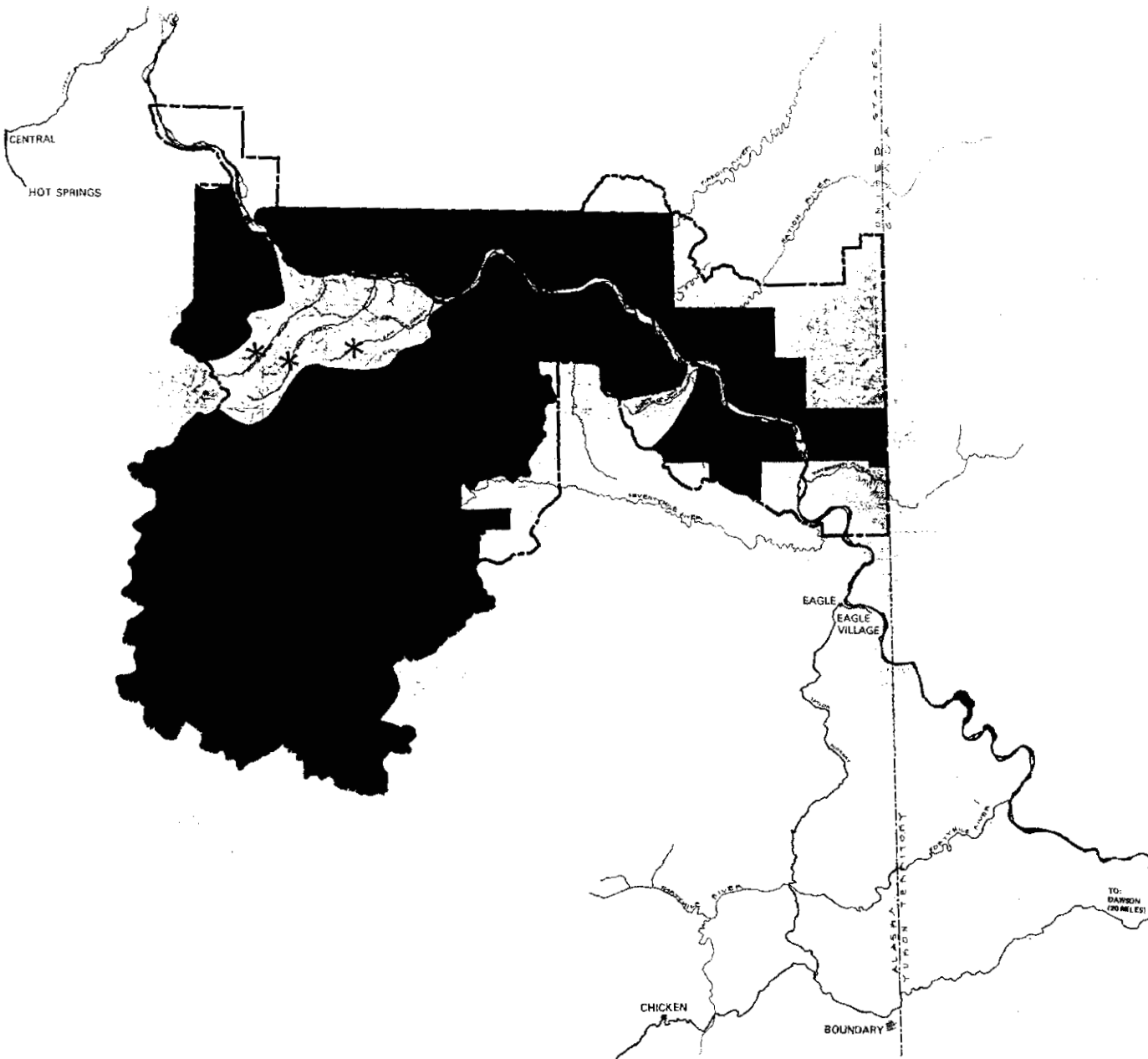
Montauk unit (79,710 acres): Michigan, Trout, and Montauk creeks


Seven Creeks unit (47,030 acres): Glenn, Keenan, Logan, Dewey, Butte, Sly, and Bull creeks


These outstanding primitive areas include a designated national wild river, and other outstanding natural features in efficient management units. The Charley basin, a primitive watershed specially recognized by Congress, is particularly suitable, and its designation as wilderness would further carry out the intent of Congress to maintain it in its natural and undeveloped condition. The native allotment and cemetery/historic site applications in any of these units are not expected to affect wilderness suitability: If conveyed, they could be easily excluded, or if not excluded, wilderness designation is not likely to have an effect on the traditional activities of the holders of these allotments.

Following analysis of public response on this suitability review, the National Park Service may make a wilderness proposal to the secretary of the interior, who will in turn make a recommendation regarding wilderness designation to the president and Congress. As required in ANILCA, the president is to make his recommendations prior to December 2, 1987.


Regardless of this suitability review or any subsequent National Park Service proposal, wilderness can be designated only by Congress, and any subsequent change in the status and management of designated areas can also be accomplished only by Congress.



 SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS  
 DESIGNATION: 1,815,370 AC  
 72% OF TOTAL PRESERVE  
 85% OF FEDERAL PRESERVE

 \*  
 ALTHOUGH THESE DRAINAGES  
 UNPATENTED MINING CLAIMS  
 THAT ARE NOT CLAIMED ARE  
 FOR WILDERNESS, SHOULD THE  
 MINING CLAIMS NOT BE WORKED  
 TO THE NPS, THEY WOULD BE  
 SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS.

NOTE: NATIVE AND VILLAGE  
 LANDS HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED  
 SHOULD IN THE FUTURE COME  
 NPS JURISDICTION IN THEIR  
 NATURAL STATE, THEY WOULD BE  
 SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS.

 0 5 10 MILES  
 NORTH 0 5 10 KILOMETERS

## WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

YUKON-CHARLEY RIVERS  
 NATIONAL PRESERVE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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